

## **HISTORY OF AVP (NSW)**

### **Alternatives to Violence Project, New South Wales**

AVP NSW started running workshops in 1992 in both prisons and in the community. In 1994 AVP Sydney made the decision to focus on running workshops in the community. This decision has worked well with AVP Sydney averaging one community workshop per month since 1994 to a wide range of community participants. Initially many of the participants and early facilitators were Quakers, however over the years there have been people involved for many faiths. AVP (NSW) was incorporated in 1994.

In 1994 Graeme Stuart started an AVP group in Newcastle. They ran workshops in the community and with youth. When Graeme asked overseas AVP groups for a youth AVP manual he was given the Help Increase the Peace Program or HIPP Manual. So we thought that AVP Youth was called HIPP. Later all AVP youth workshops held around Australia were called HIPP workshops.

In 1995 Laurel Thomas developed an active AVP prison program. At its peak there were at least 25 workshops held per year in five NSW prisons and there were 75 inside AVP facilitators. Sabine Erica became the Coordinator of the AVP NSW Prison Program in 2004. Both Laurel and Sabine also ran some workshops in the Blue Mountains community.

In 1997 Julei Korner and Lyn Doppler, and their team of Special Education teachers developed an active AVP schools program in the 40 inner city schools of the Port Jackson District. Over the next 15 years the team ran over 1,000 AVP youth or HIPP workshops in Sydney schools. Julei and the team also visited Brisbane, Perth, Hobart, Darwin and Papua New Guinea training local AVP facilitators to run HIPP workshops.

Over the years the AVP program waxed and waned in a number of places in New South Wales. Workshops have continued in Sydney and there were AVP programs in Newcastle (community, youth and prison) the Blue Mountains and a program in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) (community and prison).

Highlights of AVP in NSW include

- AVP NSW would like to thank Quakers for their ongoing support over the last 20 plus years, including providing the Devonshire Street Meeting House free for the AVP First Friday support group that have held mini AVP workshops on the first Friday of every month for over 14 years
- 2000 AVP facilitators wrote a "spin off" course based on AVP for TAFE NSW called Transforming Conflict. The Transforming Conflict teachers' manual was published by TAFE NSW. These modules became national modules that in 10 years reached over 100,000 students nationally
- 2003-2006 training and supporting facilitators who developed an AVP program in Papua New Guinea
- 2005-2006 ran a series of AVP Interfaith workshops in partnership with the Forum for Australian Islamic Relations (FAIR). This project of 20 workshops throughout Australia was funded by a grant from the Department of Immigration
- 2008-2012 trained and supported facilitators who developed an AVP program in Nepal
- 2011- in partnership with AVP Tasmania trained and supported facilitators who are developing an AVP program in Afghanistan
- 2011- joined other facilitators from Western Australia and Queensland to train and support the development of an AVP program in Darwin with refugees from Africa and Asia
- Over the years AVP NSW facilitators have joined AVP workshop teams in most Australian AVP groups and in some countries overseas. Some AVP NSW

facilitators have served in committees in both AVP USA and AVP International and on the AVP Board of Trustees in both these groups

- AVP Sydney has written a number of local AVP manuals. The 2011 AVP Sydney Concise Manual was written to support the first refugee workshops that were run in Darwin. It is easy to translate and has recently been part of the collection of AVP manuals that were distributed to all AVP country groups worldwide

AVP Sydney is currently working in partnership with NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS - [www.startts.org.au](http://www.startts.org.au)). This program, with refugees from Asia, the Middle East and Africa, is called Community Conflict Transformation or Peace Leadership. Currently we run monthly workshops, and have trained 43 new facilitators from a refugee background. This invigorated AVP group is now planning to double the number of AVP workshops run per year with regular workshops with communities from different countries around the world.

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